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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KATHMANDU 000468

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SA/INS
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [NE](#) [GON](#)

SUBJECT: NEPAL'S TOP POLITICOS SHUN PM; PUSH FOR ALL-PARTY GOVERNMENT

REF: A. (A) KATHMANDU 0426

[1](#)B. (B) KATHMANDU 0292

Classified By: AMB. MICHAEL E. MALINOWSKI. REASON: 1.5 (B,D).

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) On March 10 leaders of most political parties boycotted for the second time an all-party meeting called by interim Prime Minister Chand. One day later, 11 left-wing parties, including the Maoists, met to discuss "a joint movement" against Chand's government. King Gyanendra met separately with leaders of most major political parties on March 10 and 11. In at least one of these meetings, the King reportedly hinted at dissatisfaction with the performance of the interim government, thereby presumably opening the possibility of a replacement. On March 12 the leaders of the two largest political parties agreed to press the King either to reinstate Parliament or establish an all-party government to replace the Chand government. The parties' continued opposition to the Chand government and increasingly unified stand may increase pressure on the Palace to consider an all-party government. The Maoists, however, are likely to object strongly to such a government if it is headed by the moderate Communist Party of Nepal - United Marxist Leninist (UML). End summary.

PARTIES MEET KING;
SHUN CHAND

[1](#)2. (C) On March 10 and 11 King Gyanendra met separately with the leaders of most political parties that had members in the previous Parliament. (Note: The King did not meet with the heads of the National Democratic Party and the Nepal Sadbhavana Party, the parties of the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister respectively, as they are already represented in the interim government. Amik Sherchan, leader of the far-left People's Front Nepal, declined the King's invitation because it did not satisfy the parties' previous request to meet the monarch as a group. End note.) In his March 11 meeting with Sher Bahadur Deuba, former Prime Minister and current head of the Nepali Congress (Democratic), the King "conveyed the impression that he is not satisfied with the current government" of Prime Minister Lokendra Bahadur Chand, according to Minendra Rijal, a Deuba confidante, and hinted at the possibility of an all-party government. Deuba reportedly told the King that he would participate, if asked, in such a government. Deuba's party has not formed "a firm opinion" regarding prospects for peace, Rijal said, since "we don't know what arrangements (have been made) between the King and the Maoists" and are thus only "second-guessing the Government."

[1](#)3. (U) While nearly all of the parties accepted the King's invitation to meet, none (except the National Democratic Party and the Nepal Sadbhavana Party) extended similar courtesy to PM Chand on March 10, when they boycotted for the second time in two months an all-party meeting he called to discuss prospective negotiations with the Maoists. The local independent press reporting the boycott accorded prominent coverage to party leaders' derisive characterizations of the Chand government ("unconstitutional," "illegitimate," "puppet") to justify their decisions to stay away. With so many no-shows, an all-party meeting originally intended to discuss how the interim government can bring the Maoists into the political mainstream focused instead on how the interim government could induce parties already in the political mainstream to recognize its legitimacy.

LEFT-WING UNITY

[1](#)4. (SBU) On March 11 Madhav Kumar Nepal, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Nepal - United Marxist Leninist (UML), hosted a meeting of representatives of 11 far-left

parties, including the Maoists--the first time all 11 parties had met together since the early 1990s, according to one participant. (Note: Only 3 of the 11 had representatives in the most recent Parliament. End note.) C.P. Mainali, Chairman of the Communist Party of Nepal - Marxist Leninist (ML), who attended the meeting, said Nepal proposed the formation of an all-party government to replace the current non-party government. All of the legal party participants supported the proposal, Mainali reported. Maoist representative Dinanath Sharma said he must seek his leadership's permission before making a commitment, but pledged support for "progressive change," including the parties' "united move" to protest the King's "regressive action" (i.e., his appointment of a non-party interim government in October). The proposal must be approved by the three political forces--the King, the parties, and the Maoists--if it is to work, Mainali noted. He said he is optimistic that both the Palace and the Maoists, who he said do not recognize the Chand government, will accept the proposal. The Maoists would not be able to participate directly in the envisioned all-party government, Mainali said, but could perhaps nominate surrogate representatives from legal far-left parties sympathetic to them. Whether the Maoists would accept an all-party government headed by Madhav Nepal is a "difficult question," Mainali conceded, but suggested that the contentious question of leadership could be amicably sorted out once the Maoists endorse the concept of an all-party government.

KOIRALA CLIMBS DOWN

15. (SBU) In a show of unprecedented unity, on March 12 the leaders of four Parliamentary parties, including UML General Secretary Nepal and Nepali Congress President G.P. Koirala,

SIPDIS announced that they would support replacing the Chand government with either an all-party government (Nepal's preferred option) or through the reinstatement of Parliament (Koirala's pet proposal). (Note: Although the National Democratic Party did not attend that meeting, its leadership has indicated privately it would join an all-party government. End note.) The leaders said they will seek a joint meeting with the King to explain their proposals, and will foster public support and pressure through a series of mass meetings. The statement marks the first time Nepali Congress President Koirala has compromised on his previously rigid stand that Parliament must be reinstated.

COMMENT

16. (C) Before March 12 the Parliamentary parties (minus the PM's National Democratic and the Deputy PM's Nepal Sadbhavana Parties) had been united only in their opposition to the Chand government. Disagreement over what (or, more accurately, who) would replace the King's appointed Cabinet had prevented the formation of a unified multipartisan front. The Nepali Congress' Koirala had been especially rigid in his near-monomaniacal insistence on reinstating Parliament. As long as the parties remained divided, the Palace could more easily dismiss their complaints about the "illegitimate" interim government by citing their failure to propose a workable alternative. The parties' new-found unity and Koirala's atypical compromise will make this more difficult. The multi-partisan unity, if it lasts, will also complicate matters for the Maoists, who had thrived on the partisan strife of the domestic political arena over the past decade. We agree with Mainali's analysis that the all-party proposal must win the approval of the Palace, parties, and the Maoists in order to succeed, but are less sanguine that the all-important question of who would lead this government may not prove a deal-breaker. Despite the lip service to "progressive change" the Maoist representative offered in his meeting with the left parties, we sincerely doubt the insurgents would welcome any "progressive change" that results in a government led by its arch enemy, the UML.

MALINOWSKI